

Power of Prayer

(New year talks 2017 by Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati.)

I wish all of you a happy, healthy, prosperous, productive, and a cash-full new year 2017.

I will start my talk with a story narrated by swāmi cinmayānandā. There was an unique kingdom with an unique rule. Anybody can rule it for 5 years with the help of able ministers. But at the end of 5 years, he has to leave the kingdom and live in a dense forest. The forest is full of wild animals. He cannot come back to the kingdom. There is a big, wide river full of crocodiles and other reptiles. Only death is his lot.

Some people wanted to enjoy the luxuries of the kingdom and became the king. They enjoyed for 4 years. But on the fifth year, they were thinking of the forest only. They were worried and tense. As the day grew nearer, they pleaded with the ministers to let them stay in the kingdom. But they were forced to go to the forest. A boat man took them to the forest.

This went on for some time. Then, came an intelligent king. He agreed for the rules. He was happy and enjoying the kingdom. When the fifth year came, he was happy and not worried at all. All were surprised.

On the last day, he thanked the ministers and bid farewell. The boat man came. The king got on the boat and was cheerful. The boat man was surprised and asked him how he could be so cheerful, all others were crying and worried. The king laughed and said, "I know, I will have to leave after 5 years. I had so much power for all these years. I used those powers to clear the dense forest. I made a kingdom there. I appointed new ministers and other officials. I have made ways for people to move there. I made new laws. On going there, I will be anointed as the new King. I am looking forward to it".

That is intelligence; preparing for the future while enjoying the present. Every human being is like that king of the kingdom.

Human being is given a Kingdom, called yauvana sāmrajyam, the kingdom of youth. In this kingdom of youth, we have all powers, all privileges, all independence, good physical strength, and all good faculties at our disposal. We can do whatever we want in this kingdom of youth. But for some time only. Later, we will be banished to a huge forest called vārdhakya vanam, meaning old age. It will be utter darkness.

In old age, we will lose our faculties, our powers, privileges and there will be wild animals in the form of degenerative diseases.

Since everyone will have young age and then followed by old age, we have a choice.

Like an unintelligent person, we can waste away the youth and fear the old age when it comes. Or, like the intelligent king in the story, we can enjoy the youth and simultaneously prepare ourselves for the old age and be cheerful always.

Then comes the next question, what should be the preparation and when should the preparation start?

यावत्स्वस्थमिदं शरीरमरुजं यावज्जरा दूरतो
यावच्चेन्द्रियशक्तिरप्रतिहता यावत्क्षयो नायुषः ।
आत्मश्रेयसि तावदेव विधुषा कार्यः प्रयत्नो महान्
संदीप्ते भवने तु खूपकननं प्रत्युद्यमः कीदृशः ॥ ७५ ॥

yāvatsvasthanidam śarīramarujaṃ yāvajjarā dūrato
yāvaccendriyaśaktirapratihatā yāvatkṣayo nāyuṣaḥ ।
ātmaśreyasi tāvadeva vidhuṣā kāryaḥ prayatno mahān
saṁdīpte bhavane tu khūpakanaṁ pratyudyamaḥ kīdr̥śaḥ ॥ 75 ॥
bharr̥hareḥ vairāgya śatakam

As long as this body is healthy and free of infirmity, as long as senility is distant, as long as the faculties have not lost their vigour, as long as life is not enfeebled, till then should the wise ones make great efforts to reach the supreme goal of life. For what is the use of digging a well when the house is on fire?

Similarly, the preparation must start young. The question is what is the preparation? The answer is given by all our scriptures. And, Lord Kṛṣṇā in the Bhagavad Gītā, talks (Chapter 2, verse 27) about the important preparation every human being should do when one is young.

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ २-२७ ॥

jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyurdhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca ।
tasmādaparihārye'rthe na tvaṁ śocitumarhasi ॥ 2-27 ॥

Kṛṣṇā uses a very important word - *aparihāryaḥ arthaḥ* which means, helpless situation. Every living being, in general and every human being in particular, will confront certain situations in life - which are unavoidable and irremediable. Such unavoidable and irremediable situations are called *aparihāryaḥ arthaḥ*, choice-less situations or helpless situations. We do not say all situations are helpless situations. Bhagavan has given us lot of powers. We have freewill. We have got resources. We can try to avoid unpleasant situations by taking precautions. And we do have remedies for many unpleasant situations. We do not say all situations are *aparihāryam*, but, there will be some situations which are *aparihāryam*, choice less. Every human being will have to confront those situations, even when one is young. But, the thing is, during young age, may be the helpless situations are less. And as one grows older and older, most of the situations or many situations will become helpless. It can even be a simple task like getting up! As I said, even sitting down and getting up may become a project. Many things which we took for granted can become almost impossible tasks. Therefore, if I should confront helpless situations later, I should strengthen myself mentally for going through such situations, with a mind which can enjoy calmness, cheerfulness and confidence. CCC mind. A mind which can go through the situations without despair, without dejection, without disillusionment, without depression.

I cannot do anything to the situation. Why? The situation itself is choice less. Therefore, without all these problems if I have to go through such situations and survive, I can do something to the mind only. The only intelligent thing that I can do is, mind-empowering. Mind-charging exercises I should do. By those I make the mind strong enough to go through such situations and maintain CCC - calmness, cheerfulness and confidence. When you cannot change the situation, we have to charge the mind. Kṛṣṇā says in Bhagavad Gita (2-14)

मात्रास्पर्शस्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः।
आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत॥ २-१४॥

mātrāsparśārstu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ |
āgamāpāyino'nityāstāṁstitikṣasva bhārata || 2-14 ||

titikṣasva means, toughen your mind so that aparihārye'rthe na tvam śocitumarhasi. titikṣasva na śocitumarhasi - go through them without despair, without dejection. How do you charge the mind?

And Kṛṣṇā Himself answers - with regard to the charging of the mind, there is only one power house. And that power house has created the entire universe; the omniscient, omnipotent power; the cause of the universe - Bhagavān alone is the only power house. Without connecting to that, you can never make the mind CCC

All our scriptures define Bhagavān in several words. But, two words are significant. In fact, we can use those two words to charge the mind. One word is 'anantaḥ' which means, the infinite one, the limitless one. Another word is 'Bhagavān' - "bhagaḥ asya asti iti bhagavān" - that one which has got six resources in infinite measure. Six fold powers in infinite measure. Bhagaḥ means, six-fold powers, in infinite measure, 'vān' means, endowed with. Anantaḥ Bhagavān means, infinite God with infinite powers.

The scriptures define these six powers –

ऐश्वर्यस्य समग्रस्य वीर्यस्य यशसः श्रियः
ज्ञानवैराग्ययोश्चैव षण्णां भग इतिरणा॥

aiśvaryaśya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ
jñānavairāgyayoścaiva ṣaṇṇāṁ bhaga itiraṇā || viśnu purāṇā 6.5.47

Aiśvaryam means, mastery. Mastery over the situation. Not being over powered by any situation. That is called over-lordship or aiśvaryam.

Then, vīryam. Vīryam means, the courage to say that, 'I am capable' and 'I am ready to go through any choice-less situation'. If I should have the courage to say that, I should get that courage from the infinite vīryam, the Bhagavān. The inner courage that I can confront any situation is vīryam. Then, the other four are, yaśaḥ is fame; śriyaḥ is wealth; jñānam is knowledge; vairāgyam is detachment. These are the six powers.

For us, two of them are relevant; aiśvaryam and vīryam. That Bhagavān becomes the power house, by connecting with which, I draw energy. That process of connecting the mind to Bhagavān is called bhakti or called prārthanā or prayer. And Kṛṣṇā prescribes prayer as the method of regular charging of the mind, so that, at the end I can say, 'I am capable and ready to face any situation!'

The prayer can be any form. Kayika prayer is physical pūjā. Vācika prayer is verbal pūjā - like recitation etc.,. Mānasa prayer is mental prayer. Among them, Lord Kṛṣṇā says, the best prayer is - "yajñānāṁ japayaḥso'smi" [Gīta 10.25]. Japa means, what? mantra āvṛttiḥ.

And, what is the best mantrā for charging the mind? The best mantrā is, "oṁ namo bhagavate anantāya ". In this mantrā, both Bhagavān and Anantaḥ are there. Bhagavān means, the source of infinite aiśvaryam and vīryam. Anantaḥ means, the source of infinite power.

If we chant any mantrā, especially this mantrā, any number of times, we are connecting the mind with the power house. While chanting, the saṅkalpa is very important. What is the saṅkalpa? I want the mind to face helpless situations. And therefore, the saṅkalpa is not for external changes. It is not for getting something or getting rid of something. That is not my aim. My aim is, empowering

the mind; charging the mind. To confront what situation? *aparihāryaḥ arthaḥ* - helpless situations. Therefore, helpless situations can be minor traffic jam, it can be anything. An incurable disease; or, it may be being bed-ridden in old age. We do not know what can happen. There is no predictability. Life is unpredictable and often uncontrollable. Helpless situations galore. If I have to face them and maintain CCC, the only way is, I have to strengthen the mind. Hence, I chant 'oṃ namo bhagavate anantāya'.

And, at the end of that japa, I repeat the *saṅkalpa*, my aim. It is called *saṅkalpaḥ*; because, I have got faith in God. The whole thing is, faith-based. I have got faith in God. I have connected my mind with God through the japa, 108 times, 1008 times etc,. That means, at the end of the japa, I have charged my mind. Now, I tell myself, 'because of the charged mind, I am now strong. I am capable and I am ready for any blessed situation'. This is called *saṅkalpa śakti*. From the *saṅkalpa śakti* of *Īśvara*, I borrow *saṅkalpa śakti* to my own mind. And I tell, 'I am ready for that'. And when I do this auto suggestion at the end of this japa, you will find that I get an energised personality. I can go out and face any situation. And, the amount of energy that I draw is directly proportional to the degree of *śraddhā* or faith I have with regard to *Bhagavān*, *mantrā*, *pūjā* etc,. The benefit is directly proportional to one's *śraddhā* in that.

मन्त्रे तीर्थे द्विजे दैवे दैवज्ञे भेषजे गुरौ
यादृशी भावना यत्र सिद्धिर्भवति तादृशी - समयोचितपद्यमालिका
mantre tīrthe dvije daive daivajñe bheṣaje gurau
yādṛśī bhāvanā yatra siddhirbhavati tādṛśī - samayocitapadyamālikā

Mantras, pilgrimages, brahmanas (knower of Brahman), deities, seekers/knowers of God, doctors, and teachers - their usefulness (to us) will be proportional to the faith we put in them. Mind has got the unique faculty of utilising the *śraddhā*. Lord *Kṛṣṇā* says *śrāddatva* – May you have that *śraddhā* [Gīta 9-3] -

अश्रद्धधानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परन्तप।
अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥ ९-३ ॥
aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya parantapa |
aprāpya mām nivartante mṛtyusaṁsāravartmani || 9-3 ||

- have *śraddhā* in the power house. Have *śraddhā* in the prayer and start. You will find that you are able to face even difficult situations with minimum scare.

We will be able to maintain a calm, cheerful, confident and courageous mind. In life situations if we practice this when we are young, we are ready for our old age. So, this is the remedy given by Lord *Kṛṣṇā*. This is called japa or bhakti, bhakti-based strengthening of the mind.

But, our scriptures point out that, *Īśvara* should not be purely based on *śraddhā* alone. Initially you start your life with *Īśvara śraddhā*, for strengthening the mind. But later, you should come to *Īśvara jñānam*; because, faith-based *Īśvara* is always weak. It can be shaken by any one, by challenging. And, all the other religions stop with *śraddhā*. But, our scriptures say, never stop with *śraddhā*. From *Īśvara śraddhā*, we have to go to *Īśvara jñānam*.

We have got a portion in our scriptures dedicated to *Īśvara jñānam*. The first portion of our scriptures, *veda pūrva bhāga*, focuses on *Īśvara śraddhā* or *parokṣa jñānam*. Whereas, the *veda anta bhāga* or the *upaniṣad* concentrates on *Īśvara jñānam*. Everyone will have to come to *jñānam* one day or the other. Until then, may you lead your life based on *śraddhā*.

How does vedāntā give evidence for God? It's a very big topic. It is the analysis of upaniṣad. But, I will just summarise the approach of vedānta. It solves this problem regarding the evidence for the existence of God, not in a direct manner; but, in an indirect manner, by giving an equation. The central teaching of vedāntā or upaniṣad is a profound equation, called mahā vākya.

It says, Bhagavān - whom one has been worshiping all the time with bhakti, that Bhagavān is equal to bhaktaḥ.

Bhagavān = bhaktaḥ

This equation is presented in several ways. But, one sentence is, soham = saḥ aham.

soham mantrā means, "Bhagavān eva bhaktaḥ; bhaktaḥ eva bhagavān". That is the profound equation. In fact, they chant this mantrā every day before the pūjā, with an intention that we have to discover this equation later.

देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तः सजीवः केवलः शिवः।

त्यजेदज्ञान-निर्मल्यं सोऽहंभावेन पूजयेत्॥

deho devālayaḥ proktaḥ sajīvaḥ kevalaḥ śivaḥ ।

tyajedaḥjāna-nirmalyaṁ so'haṁbhāvena pūjayet ॥

There is no difference between Bhagavān, the creator of the universe and bhaktā, the observer of the universe, the experiencer of the universe. In English, this is called, creator-observer equation. A very tough and profound equation.

अदृष्टो द्रष्टा, अश्रुतः श्रोता, अमतो मन्ता, अविज्ञातो विज्ञाता; नान्योऽतोऽस्ति द्रष्टा, नान्योऽतोऽस्ति श्रोता, नान्योऽतोऽस्ति मन्ता, नान्योऽतोऽस्ति विज्ञाता - बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् ३-७-२३

adr̥ṣṭo draṣṭā, aśrutaḥ śrota, amato mantā, aviḥjāto viḥjātā; nānyo'to'sti draṣṭā, nānyo'to'sti śrota, nānyo'to'sti mantā, nānyo'to'sti viḥjātā - bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad 3.7.23

All these are the same equation only.

स य एषोऽणिमैतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत्सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो इति भूय एव मा भगवान्चिज्ञापयत्विति तथा सोम्येति होवाच - छान्दोग्य उपनिषद् ६.९.४

sa ya eṣo'ṇimaitadātmyamida sarvaṁ tatsatya sa ātmā tattvamasi śvetaketo iti bhūya eva mā bhagavānvijāpayatviti tathā somyeti hovāca - chāndogya upaniṣad 6.9.4

And, vedāntā says, 'you have to enquire into this equation; and through long enquiry you have to understand this equation'. If a person is willing to take all the pains - long śravaṇam, mananam, nidhidhyāsanam - it is a very big project. For this only, in the olden days, they took sanyāsā itself. They renounced everything. They dedicated the entire life, dropping everything, for the pursuit of assimilating this profound equation.

Once this profound equation is understood, then three problems are simultaneously solved. We all have different misconceptions regarding God. So, the first thing is, all misconceptions regarding God will go away.

The second advantage of this equation is, that all misconceptions regarding bhakta, (myself), that is self-misconceptions also will go away. According to vedāntā, we do not know ourselves and we have taken us for granted. Like, for several years humanity thought, the Sun is going around earth based on the experience, but factually it is earth which goes around the sun. Similarly we have experience based misconceptions about God and about ourselves. When this equation is understood, self-misconception will go away. First two benefits are, God realization and Self realization.

Then, all the misconceptions regarding evidence for the existence of God also will go away. Once the equation Bhagavān = bhaktaḥ, is understood, the existence of the bhakta becomes the evidence for the existence of the God. And who is the bhakta? I am the blessed bhakta. So, my existence itself is the evidence for the existence of God. Self-existence is self-evident. Thus, connecting with our equation, God's existence is self-evident. Therefore, seeking evidence for the existence of the God is not necessary.

Upaniṣad says –

असन्नेव स भवति। असद्ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत्। अस्ति ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद। सन्तमेनं ततो विदुरिति। - तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद् ब्रह्मानन्दवल्ली ६.१
asanneva sa bhavati | asadbrahmeti veda cet | asti brahmeti cedveda | santamenam tato viduriti | - taittirīyopaniṣad brahmānandavallī 6 .1

Whoever negates God is negating oneself only. Thus, from īśvara śraddhā one comes to īśvara jñānam. And coming to īśvara jñānam is realising, that power house is not somewhere, that powerhouse is myself. I myself have infinite power to confront any situation.

Therefore, daily morning I start with invoking my own greater power and tell that, 'I have got all resources to confront anything, including my old age and death'.

Until you discover the power in you, may you have śraddhā in God. But, ultimate thing is what? Either from God or from yourself, either through śraddhā or through jñānam, may you draw power to the mind and make the mind powerful. Every morning charge the battery - either through īśvara śraddhā or īśvara jñānam; either from outside or from yourself. From where you draw it, does not matter; but, draw the strength and start the day by saying, 'I am capable; and I am ready for any choice-less situation that may come. And in spite of all those situations, I will be calm, cheerful and confident'.

Let us all start this New Year, having done our connection with the Lord, by saying, 'I am now ready for 2017. And any situation comes, I will confront. And I will be like the intelligent King! I am the master in youth and I am the master in old age also!' This Self-Mastery is the aim of the human being.

With these words, I would like to conclude my talk. Om.

transcribe and edited talk of Swamiji's by his disciples



Smt.V.S.Kamalambal, one of the senior most disciple of Pujya Swamiji passed away on Sunday 13th November 2016 at chennai.